

Anarcho-Syndicalism Versus Political Socialism. Political Parties and Labour Unions. Federalism Versus Centralism. Germany and Spain. The Organisation of Anarcho-Syndicalism. the Impotence of Political Parties for Social Reconstruction. The CNT in Spain: its Aims and Methods. Constructive Work of the Labour Syndicates and Peasant Collectives in Spain. Anarcho-Syndicalism and National Politics. Problems of Our Times.

Front Cover:

**"The Revolution"**

**Principle:** meaningful work for everyone

**Means:** socialisation of resources

**End:** social harmony and plenty

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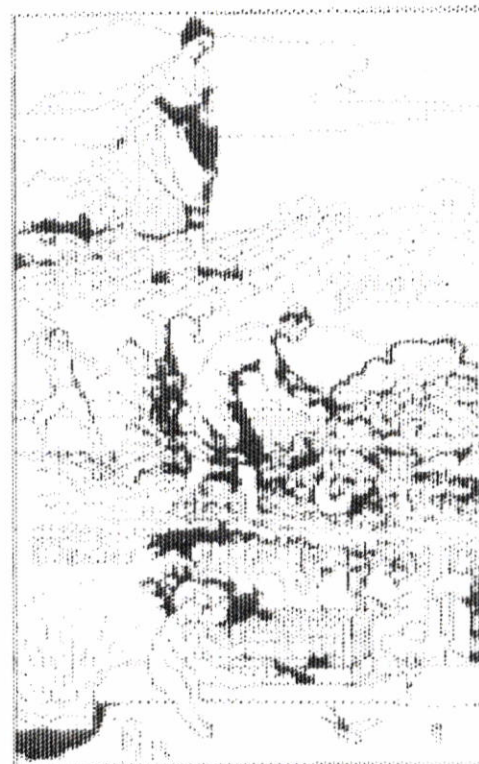
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# ***The Objectives of Anarcho- Syndicalism***



## ***Rudolf Rocker***

transport, shipping, engineering, textiles, electricity, building, agriculture. At Valencia the U.G.T. had a larger share of control than at Barcelona, but generally speaking the mass of manual workers belonged to the C.N.T. The U.G.T. membership was more of the type of the 'white-collar' worker. I was immensely impressed by the constructive revolutionary work which is being done by the C.N.T. Their achievement of workers' control in industry is an inspiration. One could take the example of the railways or engineering or textiles. There are still some Britishers and Americans who regard the Anarchists of Spain as impossible, undisciplined, uncontrollable. This is poles away from the truth. The Anarchists of Spain, through the C.N.T., are doing one of the biggest constructive jobs ever done by the working class. At the front they are fighting Fascism. Behind the front they are actually constructing the new Workers' Society. They see that the war against Fascism and the carrying through of the Social Revolution are inseparable. Those who have seen and understand what they are doing must honour them and be grateful to them. They are resisting Fascism. They are at the same time creating the New Workers' Order which is the only alternative to Fascism. That is surely the biggest thing now being done by the workers in any part of the world." And in another place: "The great solidarity that existed amongst the Anarchists was due to each individual relying on his own strength and not depending on leadership. The organisations must, to be successful, be combined with a free-thinking people; not a mass, but free individuals."

# The Objectives of Anarcho-Syndicalism

## Chapter 4 of Anarcho-Syndicalism

by Rudolf Rocker

Modern Anarcho-Syndicalism is a direct continuation of those social aspirations which took shape in the bosom of the First International and which were best understood and most strongly held by the libertarian wing of the great workers' alliance. Its present day representatives are the federations in the different countries of the revived International Workingmen's Association of 1922, the most important of which is the powerful Federation of Labour (Confederacion Nacional de Trabajo) in Spain. Its theoretical assumptions are based on the teachings of Libertarian or Anarchist Socialism, while its form of organisation is largely borrowed from Syndicalism, which in the years from 1900 to 1910 experienced a marked upswing, particularly in France. It stands in direct opposition to the political Socialism of our day, represented by the parliamentary labour parties in the different countries. While in the time of this First International barely the first beginnings of these parties existed in Germany, France and Switzerland, today we are in a position to estimate the results of their tactics for Socialism and the labour movement after more than sixty years' activity in all countries.

Participation in the politics of the bourgeois states has not brought the labour movement a hairs' breadth closer to Socialism, but, thanks to this method, Socialism has almost been completely crushed and condemned to insignificance. The ancient proverb: "Who eats of the pope, does of him," has held true in this content also; who eats of the state is ruined by it. Participation in parliamentary politics has affected the Socialist labour movement like an insidious poison. It destroyed the belief in the necessity of constructive Socialist activity and, worst of all, the impulse to self-help, by inoculating people with the ruinous delusion that salvation always comes from above.

Thus, in place of the creative Socialism of the old International, there developed a sort of substitute product which has nothing in common with real Socialism but the name. Socialism steadily lost its character of a cultural ideal, which was to prepare the peoples for the dissolution of capitalist society, and, therefore, could not let itself be halted by the artificial frontiers of the national states. In the minds of the leaders of this new phase of the Socialist movement the interests of the national state were blended more and more with the alleged aims of their party, until at last they became unable to distinguish any definite boundaries between them. So inevitably the labour movement was gradually incorporated in the equipment of the national state and



restored to this equilibrium which it had actually lost before.

It would be a mistake to find in this strange about-face an international betrayal by the leaders, as has so often been done. The truth is that we have to do here with a gradual assimilation to the modes of thought of capitalist society, which is a condition of the practical activities of the labour parties of today, and which necessarily affects the intellectual attitude of their political leaders. These very parties which had once set out to conquer Socialism saw themselves compelled by the iron logic of conditions to sacrifice their Socialist convictions bit by bit to the national policies of the state. They became, without the majority of their adherents ever becoming aware of it, political lightning rods for the security of the capitalist social order. The political power which they had wanted to conquer had gradually conquered their Socialism until there was scarcely anything left of it.

Parliamentarianism, which quickly attained a dominating position in the labour parties of the different countries, lured a lot of bourgeois minds and career-hungry politicians into the Socialist camp, and this helped to accelerate the internal decay of original Socialist principles. Thus Socialism in the course of time lost its creative initiative and became an ordinary reform movement which lacked any element of greatness. People were content with successes at the polls, and no longer attributed any importance to social up-building and constructive education of the workers for this end. The consequences of this disastrous neglect of one of the weightiest problems, one of decisive importance for the realisation of Socialism, were revealed in their full scope when after the World War, a revolutionary situation arose in many of the countries of Europe. The collapse of the old system had, in several states, put into the hands of the Socialists the power they had striven for so long and pointed to as the first prerequisite for the realisation of Socialism. In Russia the seizure of power by the left wing of state Socialism, in the form of Bolshevism paved the way, not for a Socialist society, but for the most primitive type of bureaucratic state capitalism and a reversion to the political absolutism which was long ago abolished in most countries by bourgeois revolutions. In Germany, however, where the moderate wing in the form of Social Democracy attained to power, Socialism, in its long years of absorption in routine parliamentary tasks, had become so bogged down that it was no longer capable of any creative act whatsoever. Even a bourgeois democratic sheet like the *Frankfurter Zeitung* felt obliged to confirm that "the history of European peoples has not previously produced a revolution that has been so poor in creative ideas and so weak in revolutionary energy."

But that was not all: not only was political Socialism in no position to undertake any kind of constructive effort in the direction of Socialism, it did not even possess the moral strength to hold on to the achievements of bourgeois Democracy and Liberalism, and surrendered the country without resistance to Fascism, which smashed the entire labour movement to bits with one blow. It had become so deeply immersed in the bourgeois state that it had lost all sense of constructive Socialist action and felt itself tied to the barren routine of everyday practical politics as a galley-slave was chained to his bench.

Modern Anarcho-Syndicalism is the direct reaction against the concepts and

[1] HERE ARE JUST A FEW OPINIONS OF FOREIGN JOURNALISTS WHO HAVE NO PERSONAL CONNECTION WITH THE ANARCHIST MOVEMENT.

Thus, Andrea Oltmares, professor in the University of Geneva, in the course of an address of some length, said:

"In the midst of the civil war the Anarchists have proved themselves to be political organisers of the first rank. They kindled in everyone the required sense of responsibility, and knew how, by eloquent appeals, to keep alive the spirit of sacrifice for the general welfare of the people.

"As a Social Democrat I speak here with inner joy and sincere admiration of my experiences in Catalonia. The anti-capitalist transformation took place here without their having to resort to a dictatorship. The members of the syndicates are their own masters and carry on the production and the distribution of the products of labour under their own management, with the advice of technical experts in whom they have confidence. The enthusiasm of the workers is so great that they scorn any personal advantage and are concerned only for the welfare of all."

The well-known anti-Fascist, Carlo Rosselli, who before Mussolini's accession to power was Professor of Economics in the University of Genoa, put his judgement into the following words:

"In three months Catalonia has been able to set up a new social order on the ruins of an ancient system. This is chiefly due to the Anarchists, who have revealed a quite remarkable sense of proportion, realistic understanding, and organising ability. All the revolutionary forces of Catalonia have united in a program of Syndicalist-Socialist character: socialisation of large industry; recognition of the small proprietor, workers' control. Anarcho-Syndicalism, hitherto so despised, has revealed itself as a great constructive force. I am not an Anarchist, but I regard it as my duty to express here my opinion of the Anarchists of Catalonia, who have all too often been represented to the world as a destructive, if not criminal, element. I was with them at the front, in the trenches, and I have learnt to admire them. The Catalan Anarchists belong to the advance guard of the coming revolution. A new world was born with them, and it is a joy to serve that world."

And Ferner Brockway, Secretary of the I.L.P. in England who travelled to Spain after the May events in Catalonia (1937), expressed his impressions in the following words:

"I was impressed by the strength of the C.N.T. It was unnecessary to tell me that it was the largest and most vital of the working-class organisations in Spain. The large industries were clearly, in the main, in the hands of the C.N.T.; railways, road

methods of political Socialism, a reaction which even before the war had already made itself manifest in the strong upsurge of the Syndicalist labour movement in France, Italy, and other countries, not to speak of Spain, where the great majority of the organised workers had always remained faithful to the doctrines of the First International.

The term "workers' syndicate" meant in France merely a trade union organisation of producers for the immediate betterment of their economic and social status. But the rise of Anarcho-Syndicalism gave this original meaning a much wider and deeper import. Just as the party is, so to speak, the unified organisation for definite political effort within the modern constitutional state, and seeks to maintain the bourgeois order in one form or another, so, according to the Syndicalist view, the trade union, the syndicate, is the unified organisation of labour and has for its purpose the defence of the interests of the producers within existing society and the preparing for and the practical carrying out of the reconstruction of social life after the pattern of Socialism. It has, therefore, a double purpose: 1. As the fighting organisation of the workers against the employers to enforce the demands of the workers for the safeguarding and raising of their standard of living; 2. As the school for the intellectual training of the workers to make them acquainted with the technical management of production and economic life in general so that when a revolutionary situation arises they will be capable of taking the socio-economic organism into their own hands and remarking it according to Socialist principles.

Anarcho-Syndicalists are of the opinion that political parties, even when they bear a socialist name, are not fitted to perform either of these two tasks. The mere fact that, even in those countries where political Socialism commanded powerful organisations and had millions of voters behind it, the workers had never been able to dispense with trade unions because legislation offered them no protection in their struggle for daily bread, testifies to this. It frequently happened that in just these sections of the country where the Socialist parties were strongest the wages of workers were lowest and the conditions of labour worst. That was the case, for example, in the northern industrial districts of France, where Socialists were in the majority in numerous city administrations, and in Saxony and Silesia, where throughout its existence German Social Democracy had been able to show a large following.

Governments and parliaments seldom decide on economic or social reforms on their own initiative, and where this has happened thus far the alleged improvements have always remained a dead letter in the vast waste of laws. Thus the modest attempts of the English parliament in the early period of big industry, when the legislators, frightened by the horrible effects of the exploitation of children, at last resolved on some trifling amelioration's, for a long time had almost no effect. On the one hand they ran afoul of the lack of understanding of the workers themselves, on the other they were sabotaged outright by the employers. It was much the same with the well-known law which the Italian government enacted in the middle 90's to forbid women who were compelled to toil in the sulphur mines in Sicily from taking their children down into the mines with them. This law also remained a dead letter, because these unfortunate women were so poorly paid that they were obliged to dis-



regard the law. Only a considerable time later, when these working women had succeeded in organising, and thus forcing up their standard of living, did the evil disappear of itself. There are plenty of similar instances in the history of every country.

But even the legal authorisation of a reform is no guarantee of its permanence unless there exist outside of parliament militant masses who are ready to defend it against every attack. Thus the English factory owners, despite the enactment of the ten-hour law in 1848, shortly afterward availed themselves of an industrial crisis to compel workers to toil for eleven or even twelve hours. When the factory inspectors took legal proceedings against individual employers on this account, the accused were not only acquitted, the Government hinted to the inspectors that they were not to insist on the letter of the law, so that the workers were obliged, after economic conditions had revived somewhat, to make the fight for the ten-hour day all over again on their own resources. Among the few economic improvements which the November Revolution of 1918 brought to the German workers, the eight-hour day was the most important. But it was snatched back from the workers by the employers in most industries, despite the fact that it was in the statutes, actually anchored legally in the Weimar Constitution itself.

But if political parties are absolutely incapable of making the slightest contribution to the improvement of the standard of living of the workers within present day society, they are far less capable to carry on the organic up-building of a Socialist community or even to pave the way for it, since they utterly lack every practical requirement for such an achievement. Russia and Germany have given quite sufficient proof of this.

The lancehead of the labour movement is, therefore, not the political party but the trader union, toughened by daily combat and permeated by Socialist spirit. Only in the realm of economy are the workers able to display their full social strength, for it is their activity as producers which holds together the whole social structure, and guarantees the existence of society at all. In any other field they are fighting on alien soil and wasting their strength in hopeless struggles which bring them not an iota nearer to the goal of their desires. In the field of parliamentary politics the worker is like the giant Antaeus of the Greek legend, whom Hercules was able to strangle after he took his feet off the earth who was his mother. Only as producer and creator of social wealth does he become aware of his strength, in solidary union with his fellows he creates in the trade union the invincible phalanx which can withstand any assault, if it is aflame with the spirit of freedom and animated by the ideal of social justice.

For the Anarcho-Syndicalists the trade union is by no means a mere transitory phenomenon bound up with the duration of capitalist society, it is the germ of the Socialist society of the future, the elementary school of Socialism in general. Every new social structure makes organs for itself in the body of the old organism. Without this preliminary any social evolution is unthinkable. Even revolutions can only develop and mature the germs which already exist and have made their way into the consciousness of men; they cannot themselves create these germs or create new worlds out of nothing. It therefore concerns us to plant these germs while there is

er in a successful state from the carving out of new markets at the cost of others, but at the same time their brothers on the other side of the border have to pay for them by unemployment and the lowering of their standard of living. The result is an ever-widening rift in the international labour movement, which not even the loveliest resolutions by international congresses can put out of existence. By this rift the liberation of the workers from the yoke of wage-slavery is pushed further and further into the distance. As long as the worker ties up his interests with those of the bourgeoisie of his country instead of with those of his class, he must logically also take in his stride all the results of that relationship. He must stand ready to fight the wars of the possessing classes for the retention and extension of their markets, and to defend any injustice they may perpetrate on other peoples. The Socialist press of Germany was merely being consistent when, at the time of the World War, they urged the annexation of foreign territory. This was merely the inevitable result of the intellectual attitude and the methods which the political labour parties had pursued for a long time before the war. Only when the workers in every country shall come to understand clearly that their interests are everywhere the same, and out of this understanding learn to act together, will the effective basis be laid for the international liberation of the working class.

Every time has its particular problems and its own peculiar methods of solving these problems. The problem that is set for our time is that of freeing man from the curse of economic exploitation and political and social enslavement. The era of political revolution is over, and where such still occur they do not alter in the least the bases of the capitalist social order. On the one hand it becomes constantly clearer that bourgeois democracy is so degenerate that it is no longer capable of offering effective resistance to the threat of Fascism. On the other hand political Socialism has lost itself so completely on the dry channels of bourgeois politics that it no longer has any sympathy with the genuinely Socialistic education of the masses and never rises above the advocacy of petty reforms. But the development of capitalism and the modern big state have brought us today to a situation where we are driving on under full sail toward a universal catastrophe. The last World War and its economic and social consequences, which are today working more and more disastrously, and which have grown into a definite danger to the very existence of all human culture, are sinister signs of the times which no man of insight can misinterpret. It therefore concerns us today to reconstruct the economic life of the peoples from the ground up and build it up anew in the spirit of Socialism. But only the producers themselves are fitted for this task, since they are the only value-creating element in society out of which a new future can arise. Theirs must be the task of freeing labour from all the fetters which economic exploitation has fastened on it, of freeing society from all the institutions and procedures of political power, and of opening the way to an alliance of free groups of men and women based on co-operative labour and a planned administration of things in the interests of the community. To prepare the toiling masses in city and country for this great goal and to bind them together as a militant force is the objective of modern Anarcho-Syndicalism, and in this its whole purpose is exhausted.



indisputable service of the Spanish Anarcho-Syndicalists, whose heroic example has opened for the Socialist movement new outlooks for the future.

If the Anarcho-Syndicalists are striving to implant in the working classes in every country an understanding of this new form of constructive Socialism, and to show them that they must, today, give to their economic fighting organisations the forms to enable them during a general economic crisis to carry through the work of Socialist up-building, this does not mean that these forms must everywhere be cut to the same pattern. In every country there are special conditions which are intimately intergrown with its historical development, its traditions, and its peculiar psychological assumptions. The great superiority of Federalism is, indeed, just that it takes these important matters into account and does not insist on a uniformity that does violence to free thought, and forces on men from without things contrary to their inner inclinations.

Kropotkin once said that, taking England as an example, there existed three great movements which, at the time of a revolutionary crisis would enable the workers to carry through a complete overturn of social economy: trades unionism, the co-operative organisations, and the movement for municipal Socialism; provided that they had a fixed goal in view and worked together according to a definite plan. The workers must learn that, not only must their social liberation be their own work, but that liberation was possible only if they themselves attended to the constructive preliminaries instead of leaving the task to the politicians, who were in no way fitted for it. And above all they must understand that however different the immediate preliminaries for their liberation might be in different countries, the effect of capitalist exploitation are everywhere the same and they must, therefore, give to their efforts the necessary international character.

Above all they must not tie up these efforts with the interests of the national states, as has, unfortunately, happened in most countries hitherto. The world of organised labour must pursue its own ends, as it has its own interests to defend, and these are not identical with the state or those of the possessing classes. A collaboration of workers and employees such as was advocated by the Socialist Party and the trade unions in Germany after the World War can only result in the workers being condemned to the role of the poor Lazarus, who must be content to eat the crumbs that fall from the rich man's table. Collaboration is possible only where the ends and, most importantly of all, the interests are the same.

No doubt some small comforts may sometimes fall to the share of the workers when the bourgeoisie of their country attain some advantage over that of another country; but this always happens at the cost of their own freedom and the economic oppression of other peoples. The worker in England, France, Holland, and so on, participates to some extent in the profits which, without efforts on their part, fall into the laps of the bourgeoisie of his country from the unrestrained exploitation of colonial peoples; but sooner or later there comes the time when these people, too, wake up, and he has to pay all the more dearly for the small advantages he has enjoyed. Events in Asia will show this still more clearly in the near future. Small gains arising for increased opportunity of employment and higher wages may accrue to the work-

still yet time and bring them to the strongest possible development, so as to make the task of the coming social revolution easier and to ensure its permanence.

All the educational work of the Anarcho-Syndicalist is aimed at this purpose. Education for Socialism does not mean for them trivial campaign propaganda and so-called "politics-of-the-day," but the effort to make clear to the workers the intrinsic connections among social problems by technical instruction and the development of their administrative capacities, to prepare them for their role of re-shapers of economic life, and give them the moral assurance required for the performance of the task. No social body is better fitted for this purpose than the economic fighting organisations of the workers; it gives a definite direction to their social activities and toughens their resistance in the immediate struggle for the necessities of life and the defence of their human rights. This direct and unceasing warfare with the supporters of the present system develops at the same time the ethical concepts without which any social transformation is impossible: vital solidarity with their fellows-in-desire and moral responsibility for their own actions.

Just because the educational work of the Anarcho-Syndicalists is directed toward the development of independent thought and action, they are outspoken opponents of all those centralising tendencies which are so characteristic of all political labour parties. But centralism, that artificial organisation from above which turns over the affairs of everybody in a lump to a small minority, is always attended by barren official routine; and this crushes individual conviction, kills all personal initiative by lifeless discipline and bureaucratic ossification, and permits no independent action. The organisation of Anarcho-Syndicalism is based on the principles of Federalism, on free combination from below upward, putting the right of self-determination of every member above everything else and recognising only the organic agreement of all on the basis of like interests and common convictions.

It has often been charged against federalism that it divides the forces and cripples the strength of organised resistance, and, very significantly, it has been just the representative of the political labour parties and of the trade unions under their influence who have kept repeating this charge to the point of nausea. But here, too, the facts of life have spoken more clearly than any theory. There was no country in the world where the whole labour movement was so completely centralised and the technique of organisation developed to such extreme perfection as in Germany before Hitler's accession to power. A powerful bureaucratic apparatus covered the whole country and determined every political and economic expression of the organised workers. In the very last elections the Social Democratic and Communist parties united over twelve million voters for their candidates. But after Hitler seized power six million organised workers did not raise a finger to avert the catastrophe which had plunged Germany into the abyss, and which in a few months beat their organisation completely to pieces.

But in Spain, where Anarcho-Syndicalism had maintained its hold upon organised labour from the days of the First International, and by untiring libertarian propaganda and sharp fighting had trained it to resistance, it was the powerful C.N.T. which by the boldness of its action frustrated the criminal plans of Franco and his



numerous helpers at home and abroad, and by their heroic example spurred the Spanish workers and peasants to the battle against Fascism - a fact which Franco himself has been compelled to acknowledge. Without the heroic resistance of the Anarcho-Syndicalist labour unions the Fascist reactions would in a few weeks have dominated the whole country.

When one compares the technique of the federalist organisation of the C.N.T. with the centralistic machine which the German workers had built for themselves, one is surprised by the simplicity of the former. In the smaller syndicates every task for the organisation was performed voluntarily. In the larger alliances, where naturally established official representatives were necessary, these were elected for one year only and received the same pay as the workers in their trade. Even the General Secretary of the C.N.T. was no exception to this rule. This is an old tradition which has been kept up in Spain since the days of the International. This simple form of organisation not only sufficed the Spanish workers for turning the C.N.T. into a fighting unit of the first rank, it also safeguarded them against any bureaucratic regime in their own ranks and helped them to display that irresistible spirit of solidarity and tenaciousness which is so characteristic of this organisation, and which one encounters in no other country.

For the state centralisation is the appropriate form of organisation, since it aims at the greatest possible uniformity in social life for the maintenance of political and social equilibrium. But for a movement whose very existence depends on prompt action at any favourable moment and on the independent thought and action of its supporters, centralism could but be a curse by weakening its power of decision and systematically repressing all immediate action. If, for example, as was the case in Germany, every local strike had first to be approved by the Central, which was often hundreds of miles away and was not usually not in a position to pass a correct judgement on the local conditions, one cannot wonder that the inertia of the apparatus of organisation renders a quick attack quite impossible, and there thus arises a state of affairs where the energetic and intellectually alert groups no longer serve as patterns for the less active, but are condemned by these to inactivity, inevitably bringing the whole movement to stagnation. Organisation is, after all, only a means to an end. When it becomes an end in itself, it kills the spirit and the vital initiative of its members and sets up that domination by mediocrity which is the characteristic of all bureaucracies.

Anarcho-Syndicalists are, therefore, of the opinion that trade union organisation should be of such a character as to afford workers the possibility of achieving the utmost in their struggle against the employers, and at the same time provide them with a basis from which they will be able in a revolutionary position to proceed with reshaping of economic and social life.

Their organisation is accordingly constructed on the following principles: The workers in each locality join the unions for their respective trades, and these are subject to the veto of no Central but enjoy the entire right of self-determination. The trade unions of a city or rural district combine in a so-called labour cartel. The labour cartels constitute the centres for local propaganda and education; they wield the

system, in the textile industry, in machine construction, in building, and in the small industries. But in the war industries the syndicates have performed a genuine miracle. By the so-called neutrality pact the Spanish Government was prevented from importing from abroad any considerable amount of war materials. But Catalonia before the Fascist revolt not a single plant for the manufacture of army equipment. The first concern, therefore, was to remake whole industries to meet the war demands. A hard task for the syndicates, which already had in their hands full setting up of a new social order. But they performed it with an energy and a technical efficiency that can be explained only by the workers and their boundless readiness to make sacrifices for their cause. Men toiled in the factories twelve and fourteen hours a day to bring the great work to completion. Today Catalonia possesses 283 huge plants which are operating day and night in the production of war materials, so that the fronts may be kept supplied. At present Catalonia is providing for the greater part of all war demands. Professor Andres Olmieres declared in the course of an article that in this field the workers' syndicates of Catalonia "had accomplished in seven weeks as much as France did in fourteen months after the outbreak of the World War."

But that is not all by a great deal. The unhappy war brought into Catalonia an overwhelming flood of fugitives from all the war-swept districts in Spain; their number has today grown to a million. Over fifty per cent of the sick and wounded in the hospitals of Catalonia are not Catalonians. One understands, therefore, with what a task the workers' syndicates were confronted in the meeting of all these demands. Of the re-organisation of the whole educational system by the teachers' groups in the C.N.T., the associations for the protection of works of art, and a hundred other matters we cannot even make mention here.

During this same time the C.N.T. was maintaining 120,000 of its militia, who were fighting on all fronts. No other organisation has thus far made such sacrifices of life and limb as the C.N.T.-F.A.I. In its heroic stand against Fascism it has lost a lot of its most distinguished fighters, among them Francisco Asco and Buenaventura Duruti, whose epic greatness made him the hero of the Spanish people.

Under these circumstances it is, perhaps, understandable that the syndicates have not thus far been able to bring to completion their great task of social reconstruction, and for the time being were unable to give their full attention to the organisation of consumption. The war, the possession by the Fascist armies of important sources of raw materials, the German and Italian invasion, the hostile attitude of foreign capital, the onslaughts of the counter-revolution in the country itself, which, significantly, was befriended this time by Russia and the Communist Party of Spain - all this and many other things have compelled the syndicates to postpone many great and important tasks until the war is brought to a victorious conclusion. But by taking the land and the industrial plants under their own management they have taken the first and most important step on the road to Socialism. Above all, they have proved that the workers, even without the capitalists, are able to carry on production and to do it better than a lot of profit-hungry entrepreneurs. Whatever the outcome of the bloody war in Spain may be, to have given this great demonstration remains the



and have accorded to its constructive labours the highest admiration. Not one of them could help extolling the natural intelligence, the thoughtfulness and prudence, and above all the unexampled tolerance with which the workers and peasants of the C.N.T. have gone about their difficult task. [!] Workers, peasants, technicians and men of science had come together for co-operative work, and in three months gave an entirely new character to the whole economic life of Catalonia.

In Catalonia today three-fourths of the land is collectivised and co-operatively cultivated by the workers' syndicates. In this each community presents a type by itself and adjusts its internal affairs in its own way, but settles its economic questions through the agency of its Federation. Thus there is preserved the possibility of free enterprise, inciting new ideas and mutual stimulation. One-fourth of the country is in the hands of small peasant proprietors, to whom has been left the free choice between joining the collectives or continuing their family husbandry. In many instances their smallholdings have even been increased in proportion to the size of their families. In Aragon an overwhelming majority of the peasants declared for collective cultivation. There are in that province over four hundred collective farms, of which about ten are under the control of the Socialist U.G.T., while all the rest are conducted by syndicates of the C.N.T. Agriculture has made such advances there that in the course of a year forty per cent of the formerly untitled land has been brought under cultivation. In the Levante, in Andalusia and Castile, also, collective agriculture under the management of the syndicates is making constantly greater advances. In numerous smaller communities a Socialist form of life has already become naturalised, the inhabitants no longer carrying on exchange by means of money, but satisfying their needs out of the product of their collective industry and conscientiously devoting the surplus to their comrades fighting at the front.

In most of the rural collectives individual compensation for work performed has been retained, and the further up-building of the new system postponed until the termination of the war, which at present claims the entire strength of the people. In these the amount of the wages is determined by the size of the families. The economic reports in the daily bulletins of the C.N.T. are extremely interesting, with their accounts of the building up of the collectives and their technical development through the introduction of machines and chemical fertilisers, which had been almost unknown before. The agricultural collectives in Castile alone have during the past year spent more than two million pesetas for this purpose. The great task of collectivising the land was made much easier after the rural federations of the U.G.T. joined the general movement. In many communities all affairs are arranged by delegates of the C.N.T. and the U.G.T., bringing about a rapprochement of the two organisations which culminated in an alliance of the workers in the two organisations.

But the workers' syndicates have made their most astounding achievements in the field in industry, since they took into their hands the administration of industrial life as a whole. In Catalonia in the course of a year the railroads were fitted out with complete modern equipment, and in punctuality the service reached a point that had been hitherto unknown. The same advances were achieved in the entire transport

workers together as a class and prevent the rise of any narrow-minded factional spirit. In times of local labour trouble they arrange for the solidaric co-operation of the whole body of organised labour in the use of every agency available under the circumstances. All the labour cartels are grouped according to districts and regions to form the National Federation of Labour Cartels, which maintain the permanent connection between the local bodies, arrange for free adjustment of the productive labour of the members of the different organisations on co-operative lines, provide for the necessary co-operation in the field of education, in which the stronger cartels will need to come to the aid of the weaker ones, and in general support the local groups with council and guidance.

Every trade union is, moreover, federatively allied with all the same organisations in the same trade throughout the country, and these in turn with all related trades, so that all are combined in general industrial alliances. It is the task of these alliances to arrange for the co-operative action of the local groups, to conduct solidaric strikes where the necessity arises, and to meet all the demands of the day-to-day struggle between capital and labour. Thus the Federation of Labour Cartels and the Federation of Industrial Alliances constitute the two poles about which the whole life of the trade unions revolves.

Such a form of organisation not only gives the workers every opportunity for direct action in their struggles for daily bread, it also provides them with the necessary preliminaries for carrying through the reorganisation of social life on a Socialist plan by their own strength and without alien intervention, in case of a revolutionary crisis. Anarcho-Syndicalists are convinced that a Socialist economic order cannot be created by the decrees and statutes of a government, but only by the solidaric collaboration of the workers with hand or brain in each special branch of production; that is, through the taking over of the management of all plants by the producers themselves under such form that the separate groups, plants and branches of industry are independent members of the general economic organism and systematically carry on production and the distribution of the products in the interest of the community on the basis of free mutual agreements.

In such a case the labour cartels would take over the existing social capital in each community, determine the needs of the inhabitants of their districts, and organise local consumption. Through the agency of the national Federation of Labour Cartels it would be possible to calculate the total requirements of the country and adjust the work of production accordingly. On the other hand, it would be the task of the Industrial Alliances to take control of all the instruments of production, machines, raw materials, means of transportation and the like, and to provide the separate producing groups with what they need. In a word: 1. Organisation of the plants by the producers themselves and direction of the work by labour councils elected by them. 2. Organisation of the total production of the country by the industrial and agricultural alliances. 3. Organisation of consumption by the Labour Cartels.

In this respect, also practical experience has given the best instruction. It has shown us that economic questions in the Socialist meaning cannot be solved by a government, even when that is meant the celebrated dictatorship of the proletariat.



## The Objectives of Anarcho-Syndicalism - Page 8

In Russia the Bolshevik dictatorship stood for almost two whole years helpless before its economic problems and tried to hide its incapacity behind a flood of decrees and ordinances, of which ninety-nine percent were buried at once in the various bureaus. If the world could be set free by decrees, there would long ago have been no problems left in Russia. In its fanatical zeal for government, Bolshevism has violently destroyed just the most valuable beginnings of a Socialist social order, by suppressing the co-operatives, bringing the trade unions under state control, and depriving the soviets of their independence almost from the beginning. Kropotkin said with justice in his "Message to the Workers of the West European Countries":

*"Russia has shown us the way in which Socialism cannot be realised, although the populace, nauseated with the old regime, opposed no active resistance to the experiments of the new government. The idea of the workers' councils for the control of the political and economic life is, in itself, of extraordinary importance. But so long as the country is dominated by the dictatorship of a party, the workers' and peasants' councils naturally lose their significance. They are thereby degraded to the same passive role which the representatives of the estates used to play in the time of the absolute monarchies. A workers' council ceases to be a free and valuable adviser when no free press exists in the country, as has been the case with us for over two years. Worse still: the workers' and peasants' councils lose all their meaning when no public propaganda takes place before their election, and the elections themselves are conducted under the pressure of party dictatorship. Such a government by councils (soviet government) amounts to a definite step backward as soon as the Revolution advances to the erection of new society on a new economic basis: it becomes just a dead principle on a dead foundation."*

The course of events has proved Kropotkin right on every point. Russia is today farther from Socialism than any other country. Dictatorship does not lead to the economic and social liberation of the toiling masses, but to the suppression of even the most trivial freedom and the development of an unlimited despotism which respects no rights and treads underfoot every feeling of human dignity. What the Russian worker has gained economically under this regime is a most ruinous form of human exploitation, borrowed from the most extreme stage of capitalism, in the shape of the Stakhanov system, which raises his productive capacity to its highest limit and degrades him to galley slave, who is denied all control of his personal labour, and who must submit to every order of his superiors if he does not wish to expose himself to penalties life and liberty. But compulsory labour is the last road that can lead to Socialism. It estranges the man from the community, destroys his joy in his daily work, and stifles that sense of personal responsibility to his fellows without which there can be no talk of Socialism at all.

We shall not even speak of Germany here. One could not reasonably expect of a party like the Social Democrats, whose central organ Vorwärts, just on the evening before the November Revolution of 1918 warned the workers against precipitancy, "as the German people are not ready for a republic" that it would experiment with

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Socialism. Power, we might say, fell into its lap overnight, and it actually did not know what to do with it. Its absolute impotence contributed not a little to enabling Germany to bask today in the sun of the Third Reich.

The Anarcho-Syndicalist labour unions of Spain, and especially of Catalonia, where their influence is strongest, have shown us an example in this respect which is unique in the history of Socialist labour movement. In this they have only confirmed what the Revolutionary Unionists have always insisted on: that the approach to Socialism is possible only when the workers have created the necessary organism for it, and when above all they have previously prepared for it by a genuinely Socialistic education and direct action. But this was the case in Spain, where since the days of the International the weight of the labour movement had lain, not in political parties, but in the revolutionary trade unions.

When, on July 19, 1936, the conspiracy of the Fascist generals ripened into open revolt and was put down in a few days by the heroic resistance of the C.N.T. (National Federation of Labour) and the F.A.I. (Anarchist Federation of Iberia), ridding Catalonia of the enemy and frustrating the plan of the conspirators, based as it was on sudden surprise, it was clear that the Catalan workers would not stop halfway. So there followed the collectivising of the land and the taking over of the plants by the workers' and peasants' syndicates; and this movement, which was released by the initiative of the C.N.T. and the F.A.I., with irresistible power overran Aragon, the Levante and other sections of the country, and even swept along with it a large part of the trade unions of the Socialist Party, organised in the U.G.T. (General Labour Union). The revolt of the Fascists had set Spain on the road to a social revolution.

This same event reveals that the Anarcho-Syndicalist workers of Spain not only know how to fight, but that they are filled with that great constructive spirit derived from their many years of Socialist education. It is the great merit of Libertarian Socialism in Spain, which now finds expression in the C.N.T. and F.A.I., that since the days of the First International it has trained the workers in that spirit which treasures freedom above all else and regards the intellectual independence of its adherents as the basis of its existence. The libertarian labour movement in Spain has never lost itself in the labyrinth of an economic metaphysics which crippled its intellectual buoyancy by fatalistic conceptions, as was the case in Germany; nor has it unprofitably wasted its energy in the barren routine tasks of bourgeois parliaments. Socialism was for it a concern of the people, an organic growth proceeding from the activity of the masses themselves and having its basis in their economic organisations.

Therefore the C.N.T. is not simply an alliance of industrial workers like the trade unions in every other country. It embraces within its ranks also the syndicates of the peasant and field-workers as well as those of the brainworkers and the intellectuals. If the Spanish peasants are now fighting shoulder to shoulder with city workers against Fascism, it is the result of the great work of Socialist education which has been performed by the C.N.T. and its forerunners. Socialists of all schools, genuine liberals and bourgeois anti-fascists who have had an opportunity to observe on the spot have thus far passed only one judgement on the creative capacity of the C.N.T.